

**Amendments to the Specification**

Please amend page 14, line 23 to page 15, line 27 of the specification as follows:

Figs. 7a and 7b show the construction of the male 720 and female 740 rod members. The male rod member has a first rod end 722, a second rod end 724 and a shaft 726 therebetween. The second rod end 724 comprises a male partial hemispherical ball member 728 having a first convex surface 730 facing an inboard side 732 of the second rod end, and a first conical surface 734 facing the outboard side 736 of the second end, the inboard and outboard sides being indicated by arrows 732, 736, respectively. The conical surface 734 tapers to the a shaft 780 of a centrally located male protrusion 738 having a rounded end.

The female rod member has a first rod end 742, a second rod end 744 and a shaft 746 therebetween. The second rod end 744 comprises a female partial hemispherical ball member 748 having a second convex surface 750 facing an inboard side 752 of the second rod end, and a second conical surface 754 facing the outboard side 756 of the second end, the inboard and outboard sides being indicated by arrows 752, 756, respectively. The conical surface 754 tapers to the rim of a centrally located female recess 758 formed in the female partial hemispherical ball member 748.

As seen in Fig. 7a, when the male protrusion 740 738 enters and abuts the female recess, the first convex surface 730 of the male rod member 720 and the second convex surface of the female rod member lay on the contour of an imaginary sphere 710 having a diameter D, similar to the outer diameter of the ball collet 204 or the bulbous second end 524 of the ball rod 520. Furthermore, the center of the sphere 710 coincides with the center of a hemispherical portion 742 762 of the male protrusion 740 738, the convex outer surface of the hemispherical portion 742 762 being configured to engage the recess 758.

As seen in the two-dimensional view of Fig. 7a, the male rod member 720 has a conical surface that is cut back from the vertical plane by an angle that is preferably between 10° – 20°, more preferably between 13°-17° and most preferably about 15°. Similarly, the female rod member 740 has a conical face that is cut back by an angle that is preferably between 10° – 20°, more preferably between 13°-17° and most preferably about 15°.

As the male protrusion 738 rotates within the recess 758, the center of the sphere 710 continues to coincide with the center of the hemispherical portion of the male protrusion 738. Thus, so long as the male protrusion 738 is mated to the female recess 758, the convex surfaces 730, 750 remain on the contour of the imaginary sphere, as depicted in Fig. 7b. By virtue of this, the three-piece assembly 600 can accommodate turns of up to about  $\gamma = 30^\circ$  from collinear, as seen from the top view, along the longitudinal axis A5 of pedicle screw 100e, of Fig. 6c.